

2022 Rocky Mountain Farmers Union Special Order of Business

Agricultural Labor

In 1902 Farmers Union was birthed from the need to create a unified collective voice in support of the family farm and against those that would deprive them of fair standards, economic value, and decency. Its founding motto was to 'Secure equity, establish justice, and apply the Golden Rule.' Since then, cheap food policy, vertical industry consolidation and a lack of price transparency and true competition have kept family farms from earning adequate income and they struggle to remain economically viable year to year. These decades of harm have not only hurt farmers and their families, but the workers that they employ. It is time, in true Union fashion, to lift up our voices with Agricultural workers in a united front to explain to the American people that systemic inequities in the American food system are hurting the producers and workers that feed them.

Whereas: Farm owners and workers alike have a right to safe, dignified working conditions.

Whereas: Family farms must be economically viable in order to offer competitive wages for their employees, and spread economic success within their communities, and to the next generation.

Whereas: Workers have the right to expect a fair wage for fair labor that can lead to healthy, safe and prosperous lives no matter where in the country they reside or what crop they help produce.

Whereas: Producers should be able to negotiate fair pricing in return for the labor, investment and capital put into the production of all agricultural products.

Whereas: Workers have a right to a safe working environment, quality healthcare, compensation for long hours and a means of organizing and arbitration of grievances.

Therefore: We ask that Rocky Mountain Farmers Union and National Farmers Union work to find common ground, and work with groups representing agricultural workers to elevate the voice of all who produce food and highlight that both the needs of workers and farm and ranch owners are interdependent.

Therefore: We ask Congress to discontinue the exemption of agricultural workers and include them within the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act. This level playing field will ensure employers and workers receive equal footing to reap the rewards of true competition.

Therefore: We ask Congress and the Executive Branch to use the full might of anti-trust laws to break up oligopolies that are causing unfair markets, price fixing, and non-competitive industry consolidation.

Therefore: We ask the USDA to create a program, similar to the Fair Food Program, that distinguishes all agricultural end products that meet fair pricing and quality of work standards through the use of a label, which would allow consumers to buy with confidence while rewarding better agricultural practices and working conditions.

Therefore: We ask USDA to create incentives for participation in this program. Programs like these could allow workers to gain more market share towards wages, accountability of employers for fair standards and hearing grievances, and buy-in from food product end users to ensure that goods are not purchased at below production and labor rates.